

Executive Director's Report

Recently, the 26th Annual Lake Tahoe Summit brought national, tribal, state, and local leaders together around the theme, "Protecting Lake Tahoe's Future." Climate change threatens the Lake Tahoe Basin (Basin) with historic drought, catastrophic wildfires, severe storms, and extreme heat. These threats impact Tahoe's culture, economy, and vitality. Now, more than ever, is the time to bring public and private partners together to effect change. I am honored to steward the California Tahoe Conservancy at this critical juncture.

The Conservancy's mission to lead California's efforts to restore and enhance the Basin's extraordinary natural and recreational resources is as relevant today as it was when the Conservancy was created in 1985. Protecting Lake Tahoe's future requires a commitment of partnership, collaboration, and inclusion to make our communities and environment more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

With a focus on nature-based solutions to climate change, equitable access, biodiversity, restoration, and workforce development to support a restoration economy, the Conservancy and its partners are implementing projects that help combat climate change, build social resilience, and maintain the qualities that make Tahoe special. As a state agency, we must also focus internally, pursuing sustained funding and building the capacity and resilience to emerge from the COVID pandemic with renewed purpose and vigor. In 2023, the Conservancy will launch a partnership-driven strategic planning process for its next five-year strategic plan. The Conservancy will engage its Board and staff; Basin, regional, and state partners; and community members to develop priorities that reflect the urgency of the challenges ahead and the communities and unique environment of Lake Tahoe.

Through the amazing staff and Board at the Conservancy and the strong partnerships that exist in the Basin, we are strengthening Tahoe communities and making our natural resources more resilient to climate change.

Program Updates

1. Land Management

Land Management Projects and Contracting: Seasonal crews contracted through Tahoe Resource Conservation District (Tahoe RCD) continue to implement projects on

Conservancy lands to restore water quality, maintain properties and facilities, improve forest health and reduce wildfire risk, and resolve encroachments.

Seasonal Recreational Facilities: The Conservancy will close Tahoe Pines (Meyers) and Van Sickle Bi-State Park to vehicles for the season on October 31, depending on weather. The seasonal dog closure at the Upper Truckee Marsh ended on August 1.

2. Tahoe Livable Communities

Property Acquisitions: Over the next five years, the Conservancy has budgeted \$14 million to acquire high-priority lands when they become available. Staff is taking steps for final acquisition approval by the California Public Works Board for the Motel 6 and Knox Johnson parcels in the City of South Lake Tahoe (City).

Land Bank: The Conservancy continues to bank and transfer development rights and land coverage for affordable housing, town center, and other infill projects in the City and El Dorado and Placer counties. For example, the Conservancy sells rights to members of the public to help them meet permitting requirements. The Conservancy also exchanges rights with governmental agencies to promote various recreational, housing, and area plan goals.

Conservancy Asset Lands at 1860 Lake Tahoe Boulevard and 1029 Tata Lane: The developers for the Sugar Pine Village Project, Related California (Related) and St. Joseph Community Land Trust, began site preparation on Phase 1A in September. With 248 units, Sugar Pine Village is the largest affordable housing project in the history of the Basin. Phase 1A is expected to provide 60 units. Related continues to apply for the financing needed to complete the remaining phases of the project.

3. Community Forestry

Forest Treatments: The Conservancy is thinning forests and reducing hazardous fuels on Conservancy property in the Brockway and Carnelian areas on the north shore; the Tahoe Pines area on the west shore; the Ski Run-Bijou and Chiapa areas on the south shore; and various small properties Basinwide. Staff continues to prepare future forest management projects, including in the Tahoe City area on the north shore; the Ward Creek area on the west shore; and the North Upper Truckee, Tahoe Island, and Gardner Mountain areas on the south shore. Crews will begin burning piles in the fall.

4. Landscape Forestry

Wildfire Planning: The Conservancy awarded a \$406,500 subgrant to Tahoe RCD to update critical plans to reduce wildfire danger to Basin communities. Tahoe RCD will coordinate regional efforts to update Tahoe's pre-attack plans and the Lake Tahoe Basin Community Wildfire Protection Plan to reflect lessons learned from the 2021

Caldor Fire. The Conservancy used funds for the subgrant from a grant from the Department of Conservation through its Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Grant Program.

5. Watershed Restoration and Water Quality

Upper Truckee Marsh Restoration: The Conservancy will complete the Upper Truckee Marsh Restoration Project this year. This summer, the Conservancy removed fill to connect new wetlands at Cove East to the Upper Truckee River. Revegetation will continue through next year. The Conservancy is also completing the new pedestrian trail to Lake Tahoe at Cove East. This trail is closed from September 12 through September 30 for construction.

Future Restoration Projects: Staff advanced conceptual feasibility planning for multiple potential future projects, including restoring Ward Creek, Carnelian Creek, Trout Creek, and Cold Creek; restoring the Upper Truckee River near Sunset Stables; and future phases of restoration at the Upper Truckee Marsh. Staff anticipates that this planning will lead to future proposals for individual projects.

6. Recreation and Public Access

Destination Stewardship: Staff continued to engage in the Lake Tahoe Destination Stewardship planning process. Public and private sector organizations from the greater Tahoe region are developing a shared vision and stewardship plan to better manage outdoor recreation and visitation.

7. Climate Adaptation and Biodiversity

Biodiversity: Staff developed a document and story map detailing how the Conservancy is accelerating conservation and protecting biodiversity at Lake Tahoe by acquiring sensitive lands, restoring ecological function, and building a more resilient future under climate change. The work advances California's commitment of conserving 30 percent of its lands and coastal waters by 2030. The document and story map are available on [the Conservancy website](https://tahoe.ca.gov/programs/climate-change/) at <https://tahoe.ca.gov/programs/climate-change/>.

Budget and Accounting

On June 30, Governor Gavin Newsom signed a \$308 billion state budget. The Newsom Administration identified ten primary topics addressed by the budget: inflation, health care coverage, reproductive care, climate change, homelessness, energy production, public safety, behavioral health, and infrastructure.

New investments in this year's budget bring California's multi-year climate commitment to \$53.9 billion to protect Californians from the impacts of climate change, help forge an oil-free future, and tackle pollution. This amount includes \$5 million to the Conservancy for Wildfire and Forest Health projects, and \$6.125 million for Nature-Based Solutions to support implementation of the Pathways to 30x30 and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategies and execute the Governor's nature-based-solution agenda.

The budget includes baseline funding that covers a portion of the Conservancy's staffing and operations as well as use of general fund and existing bond funding for:

- Minor capital improvements (\$980,000), which includes small restoration projects on Conservancy land;
- Conceptual feasibility and planning (\$600,000) for initial watershed project planning;
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) upgrades (\$1,025,000) for planning and implementing updates to existing recreational sites to meet the Conservancy's ADA Transition Plan; and
- Opportunity Acquisitions (\$14,000,000) for acquiring lands in environmentally sensitive or significant resource areas.